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# How to Buy MEAT FOR YOUR FREEZER

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

# How to Buy MEAT FOR YOUR FREEZER

"Can I save money by buying a side of beef?"

This, and similar questions, are often asked by owners of home freezers. There is no easy "yes" or "no" answer. The answer can be found only by making a careful comparison of costs among the alternatives available to you.

Basically, you have three alternatives in buying meat for your freezer: buying a whole carcass, side, or quarter; buying wholesale cuts (loin, round, chuck, etc.); or buying retail cuts.

It is the purpose of this bulletin to help you compare the costs under these alternatives, and also to point out a number of other factors that you should consider. The information provided is intended primarily to answer the questions most frequently asked by consumer-buyers—those relating to costs, grades, kinds of cuts, and yields of usable meat.

## POINTS TO CONSIDER

Wholesomeness . . . quality . . . how much to buy . . . cost . . . convenience . . . service . . . and getting good value for your money . . . these are all factors you should take into account in buying meat for your freezer.

You should also consider the amount of meat you can store in your freezer, the amount your family can use within a reasonable time, and the kinds of cuts and quality your family prefers. And you should be aware of the kinds and quantity of the various cuts that you get from a carcass or wholesale cut.

As in any buying situation, success in buying meat for your freezer depends upon your knowledge of what you are purchasing.

## Carcass, Side, or Quarter

When you buy a whole carcass or side (half a carcass, including both fore and hind quarters), you will get a wide variety—the entire range of cuts, both high- and low-priced. These will include some you might not normally buy, such as the brisket, short ribs, and shank. But most locker and freezer provisioners, who specialize in preparing meat for the freezer, will convert cuts that you do not want to use “as is” into ground meat or stew meat. In addition, they will usually age meat to the extent desired and will cut it to your order.

A carcass, side or quarter is normally sold by its “hanging” or gross weight. This means the weight before cutting and trimming. The amount of usable meat you take home will, of course, be considerably less—how much less can vary substantially.

For a beef carcass, cutting loss (bone, fat trim, shrink, etc.) could vary from 20 to 30 percent or more. A 25-percent cutting loss, which is not unusual, means that a 300-pound side of beef would yield 225 pounds of usable meat cuts.

A rule of thumb for carcass beef is: 25 percent waste, 25 percent ground beef and stew meat, 25 percent steaks, and 25 percent roasts. Not all of the steaks and roasts, however, are from the loin and rib, the most tender portions. The table on page 17 will give you a good idea of the typical yield from a beef carcass or side.

Buying a quarter involves many of the considerations already mentioned. In addition, you should be aware of the difference in the kinds of cuts you get from a hindquarter as compared with a forequarter.

A hindquarter of beef will yield more steaks and roasts, but will cost more per pound than a forequarter. In 1967 and 1968, this difference in price averaged about 17 cents a pound. A forequarter of beef, while containing the delectable rib roast, has more of the less-tender cuts than the hindquarter. The chuck, or shoulder, makes up about one-half of the forequarter's weight. The yield of usable lean meat, however, is greater in the forequarter than in the hindquarter.

**APPROXIMATE YIELDS FROM WHOLESALE CUTS OF BEEF  
(300 LB. SIDE, YIELD GRADE 3)**

	% of Wholesale Cut	Pounds
<b>Round (68 lbs.)</b>		
Round Steak	39.7	27.0
Rump Roast (Boneless)	14.6	9.9
Lean Trim	17.9	12.2
Waste (fat, bone, and shrinkage)	27.8	18.9
Total Round	100.0	68.0
<b>Trimmed Loin (50 lbs.)*</b>		
Porterhouse, T-Bone, Club Steaks	30.6	15.3
Sirloin Steak	49.8	24.9
Lean Trim	6.4	3.2
Waste (fat, bone, and shrinkage)	13.2	6.6
Total Loin	100.0	50.0
* Does not include Kidney knob and flank.		
<b>Rib (27 lbs.)</b>		
Rib Roast (7" cut)	67.8	18.3
Lean Trim	12.6	3.4
Waste (fat, bone, and shrinkage)	19.6	5.3
Total Rib	100.0	27.0
<b>Square-Cut Chuck (81 lbs.)</b>		
Blade Chuck Roast	33.0	26.7
Arm Chuck Roast (Boneless)	21.5	17.4
Lean Trim	25.9	21.0
Waste (fat, bone, and shrinkage)	19.6	15.9
Total Chuck	100.0	81.0

## Wholesale cuts

If you don't want all of the cuts that come with a side or quarter, or if your freezer space is limited, you might consider buying wholesale cuts. For example, you might buy a beef short loin, from which you will get porterhouse, T-bone, and club steaks, plus some ground beef or stew meat; a whole pork loin, for pork loin roasts and chops; or a leg of lamb, for several leg chops or steaks and a roast.

Consult the carcass charts on the following pages to see the kinds of retail cuts that come from the various wholesale cuts.

Wholesale cuts usually are bought from locker and freezer provisioners and others who sell meat as sides or quarters although sometimes they can be bought at a supermarket.

**APPROXIMATE YIELDS OF CUTS FROM BEEF QUARTERS  
(300 LB. SIDE, YIELD GRADE 3)**

	<b>% of Quarter</b>	<b>Pounds</b>
<b>Hindquarter (144 lbs.)</b>		
Round Steak	18.8	27.0
Rump Roast (Boneless)	6.9	9.9
Porterhouse, T-Bone, Club Steaks	10.6	15.3
Sirloin Steak	17.3	24.9
Flank Steak	1.0	1.5
Lean Trim	14.6	21.0
Kidney	.6	.9
Waste (fat, bone, and shrinkage)	30.2	43.5
Total hindquarter	100.0	144.0
<b>Forequarter (156 lbs.)</b>		
Rib Roast (7" cut)	11.7	18.3
Blade Chuck Roast	17.1	26.7
Arm Chuck Roast (Boneless)	11.2	17.4
Brisket (Boneless)	4.0	6.3
Lean Trim	31.6	49.2
Waste (fat, bone, and shrinkage)	24.4	38.1
Total forequarter	100.0	156.0

## **Retail cuts**

A third alternative open to freezer owners is buying at retail only the particular cuts you prefer. By watching for advertised "specials" on these cuts, you can often save money.

This method of buying, of course, also enables you to buy as little, or as much, of a particular cut as you desire—and to control the amount of money you spend at one time. Buying a side or quarter of beef is a rather large investment—and if you must "finance" this purchase, you should include any interest charges when comparing the costs of alternative methods of buying.

But remember, also, that retail cuts usually must be rewrapped for long-term freezer storage—and the cost of this wrapping paper or foil should be taken into account.

See page 27 for a discussion of the importance of proper wrapping and freezing.

## How Carcass and Wholesale Cut Prices Compare

If you plan to buy a forequarter or hindquarter, or wholesale cuts, you should have some idea of how each of these is normally priced in relation to carcass prices. The tabulation below shows average New York carlot-volume prices for USDA Choice steer beef as reported by the USDA Live-stock Market News Service for 1968. These price relationships will vary considerably during the year, however, due to differences in demand. For example, during 1968, when there was relatively little variation in beef carcass prices, the average monthly price of beef loins—which produce sirloin, Porterhouse, T-bone, and club steaks—varied within a range of about 14½ cents per pound. This is because steaks are most popular in the summer cook-out season, while roasts are in greatest demand in cold weather.

ITEM	AVERAGE 1968 PRICE PER POUND
	(New York Carlot)
Carcass	\$ .46
Hindquarter	.54
Forequarter	.37
Round	.54
Loin	.76
Rib	.61
Arm chuck	.37

## Wholesomeness

Your first consideration should be to make sure the meat you buy is wholesome—fit to eat—unadulterated, and clean. You can be sure if it bears the round purple stamp with the legend, “U.S. INSP’D & P’S’D”—which means it has passed U.S. Department of Agriculture inspection for wholesomeness.



**INSPECTION  
MARK**

All meat processed in plants which sell their products across State lines must, under Federal law, be inspected for wholesomeness by USDA inspectors. USDA inspectors also supervise the cleanliness and operating procedures of these meat packing plants to make sure that meat is not contaminated or adulterated.

Under the Wholesome Meat Act of 1967, by the end of 1970 at the latest, meat animals slaughtered, and meat processed and sold without crossing State lines must be given an inspection at least equal to that now provided by the Federal Government. This will assure the wholesomeness of all meat sold to U.S. consumers.

## Quality

Quite apart from the wholesomeness of meat is its quality. Meat can be wholesome but at the same time of low quality. Do not be misled by implications that USDA inspection is assurance of **quality**—that is the function of another USDA service, meat grading.

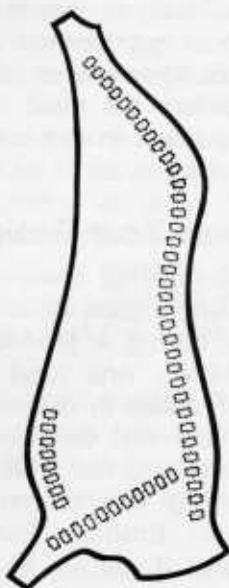
The shield-shaped USDA grade mark is a guide to the **quality** of meat—its tenderness, juiciness, and flavor — while the round inspection mark is assurance of **wholesomeness**.

USDA's Consumer and Marketing Service provides both inspection and grading services. Inspection, as explained above, is required under Federal law for meat to be sold in interstate commerce.

Grading is a voluntary service offered to packers, and others, who pay a fee for the service.



GRADE MARK



USDA has quality grades for beef, calf, veal, lamb, yearling mutton, and mutton. It also has grades for pork, but these do not carry through to the retail level as do the grades for other kinds of meat.

USDA meat grades, such as U.S. Prime, U.S. Choice, U.S. Good, are based on nationally uniform, Federal standards of quality. They are applied by experienced USDA graders, who are checked constantly by supervisors who travel throughout the country to make sure that all graders are interpreting and applying the standards in a uniform manner. Therefore, you can be sure that a U.S. Choice rib roast, for example, will provide the same good eating no matter where or when you buy it.

Only meat which has first passed inspection for wholesomeness may be graded—so when you see the purple, shield-shaped USDA grade mark it tells you two things: the quality of the meat, and the fact that it has passed inspection for wholesomeness.

The grade mark is applied with a roller stamp, and it is rolled on in a long ribbon-like imprint the length of the carcass and across the shoulders, so that it will appear on most retail cuts if not trimmed off. Ask to see the grade mark when you're buying meat for your freezer—before the meat is cut and trimmed, which may result in the removal of most of the grade marks.

## **Know Your Dealer**

Comparing costs—and making sure you are getting a good value—can be difficult when you are buying a product with which you are unfamiliar. And most consumers are unfamiliar with meats in carcass form.

Your first consideration should be to find a dealer who has a well-established reputation for honesty and fairness. Check with your local Better Business Bureau or Chamber of Commerce if you are not sure.

Although most businessmen are honest, there are always some who will take advantage of the uninformed—and there are a few practices that you should be particularly on guard against.



The old game of "bait and switch" has sprung up in recent years among some dealers who offer meat for the home freezer. This takes the form of offering meat at very low prices, sometimes advertising it as "USDA Choice" or "USDA Prime." Having attracted the customer to his establishment, the dealer will show him the "advertised" carcass. This often will be an over-fat, wasty carcass. It may, in fact, be graded "USDA Choice," but be a specially selected wasty specimen which is not typical of the grade. (See section on yield grades.)

Hanging alongside this wasty specimen, however, will be another, leaner carcass which the dealer then will convince the customer is what he really wants for his family. And of course, the price per pound will be much higher. Even though this carcass may not carry the advertised "USDA Prime" or "USDA Choice" grade mark, the dealer may assure the customer that it has been graded or that it is "Fancy," "Supreme," or some other likely sounding "grade" name.

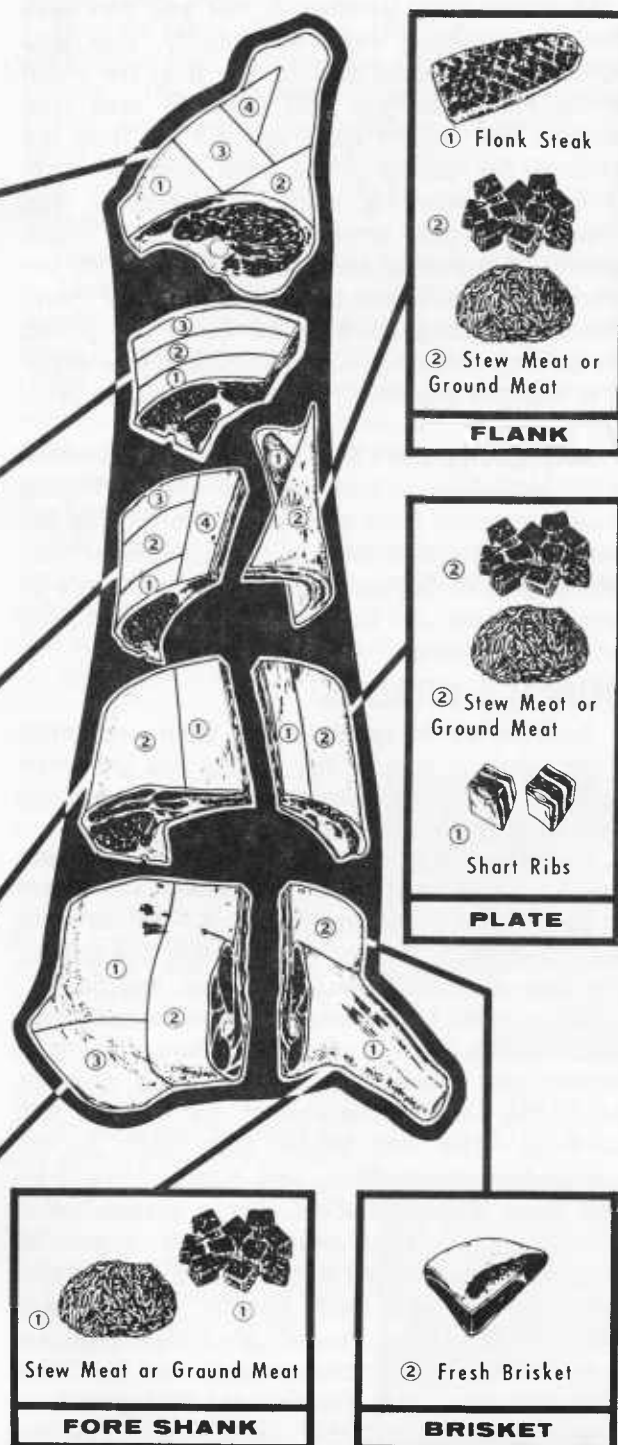
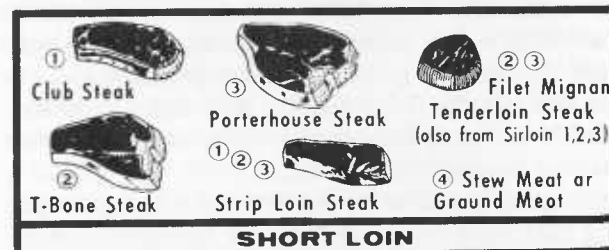
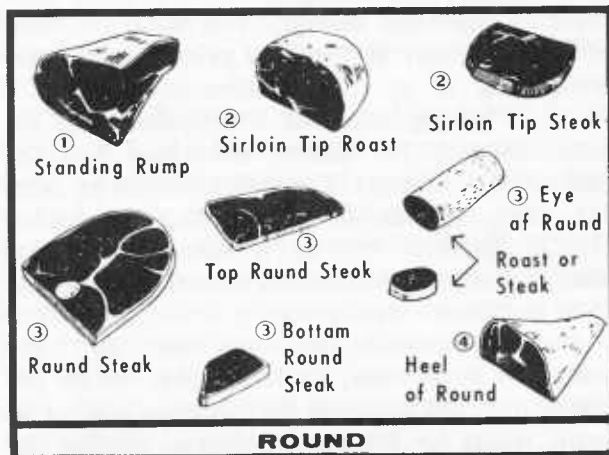
Remember that the only official USDA grades for meat are those listed and described in this pamphlet—any others can mean anything—or nothing. (USDA grades for other products—such as U.S. Grade A for poultry and dairy products and U.S. Fancy for canned fruits and vegetables **cannot** be applied to meat.)

Another practice to watch out for is substituting cuts from the forequarter for hindquarter cuts—and substituting lower grades of meat for higher grades. One customer complained to the USDA about the amount of chuck roast he got when he purchased a hindquarter. (Consult the carcass chart and you will see that the chuck is part of the forequarter.)

Some suppliers advertise a "beef bundle" or a "steak package." Unless these ads specify the grade of the meat and the kind and amount of the various cuts included, you would be well advised to buy with caution.

In general, beware of advertisements which offer "something for nothing"—bargains which are too sensational to believe. No dealer can afford to give meat away, and reputable ones will not pretend to do so.

# BEEF CHART



## BUYING BEEF

In determining whether or not you can save money by buying meat in quantity, over and above what it would cost to buy it at the retail store, remember you will have to take into account the yield of meat you will get from the carcass, the quality of the meat, and the costs of cutting, wrapping, and quick-freezing. You should find out, when buying carcass meat, whether these costs are included in the price per pound, or if you'll have to pay additional for them. The usual charge is 8 to 10 cents per pound for cutting, wrapping, and quick-freezing, whether it is charged separately or added onto the price per pound.

On pages 16 and 17, you will find a chart which will enable you to compare the cost of buying beef in carcass form with the cost of buying the same amounts of retail cuts. Similar comparisons of the cost of buying retail cuts vs. quarters or wholesale cuts can be made by using the tables on pages 4 and 5.

## QUALITY GRADES

Beef varies in quality more than any other meat. Making sure of the quality you get when you buy in quantity, then, is even more important for beef than for other meats.

USDA quality grades offer a consistent, reliable guide to the tenderness, juiciness, and flavor of beef. That is, for any given cut—for example, a sirloin steak—the higher the grade, the greater the degree of tenderness, juiciness, and flavor.

You should be aware that some cuts of beef are naturally more tender than others. The most tender are those from the less used muscles along the back of the animal, the rib and loin sections. The less tender cuts, such as the chuck (shoulder), flank, and round, come from the more active muscles. For a discussion of the various cuts of beef, and the degree of tenderness associated with each, in each grade, see "How to Buy Beef Roasts" (G-146) and "How to Buy Beef Steaks" (G-145). They are available free on postcard request from the Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250. Include your Zipcode when writing.

Each USDA beef grade is a measure of a distinct level of quality—and it takes eight grades to span the range. They are: USDA Prime, Choice, Good, Standard, Commercial, Utility, Cutter, and Canner. The three lower grades, USDA Utility, Cutter, and Canner, are seldom if ever sold at retail but are used instead to make ground beef and manufactured meat items such as frankfurters.

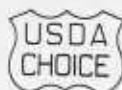
The highest grade, USDA Prime, is used mostly by hotels and restaurants, but a small amount is sold at retail and by dealers supplying freezer meat. The grade most widely sold at retail is USDA Choice. It is produced in the greatest volume and most consumers find this level of quality to their liking. In buying for your freezer, you would be well advised to select beef from the higher quality grades.

Pictured below and on the pages which follow are porterhouse steaks in the first five beef grades, together with a description of the level of quality that can be expected in each of these grades.



### **USDA PRIME**

Prime grade beef is the ultimate in tenderness, juiciness, and flavor. It has abundant marbling—flecks of fat within the lean—which enhances both flavor and juiciness. Prime roasts and steaks are unexcelled for dry-heat cooking—roasting and broiling.



### **USDA CHOICE**

Choice grade beef has slightly less marbling than Prime, but still is of very high quality. Choice roasts and steaks from the loin and rib will be very tender, juicy, and flavorful and are, like Prime, suited to dry-heat cooking. Many of the less tender cuts, such as those from the rump, round, and blade chuck, can also, if they are USDA Choice, be cooked with dry heat.





### USDA GOOD

Good grade beef often pleases thrifty shoppers because it is somewhat more lean than the higher grades. It is fairly tender, but because it has less marbling it lacks some of the juiciness and flavor of the higher grades. Some retailers sell this quality of beef under a "house" brand or private label rather than the USDA grade name.



### USDA STANDARD

Standard grade beef has a high proportion of lean meat and very little fat. Because it comes from young animals, beef of this grade is fairly tender. But because it lacks marbling, it has less flavor than the higher grades and most cuts will be somewhat dry unless prepared with moist heat.

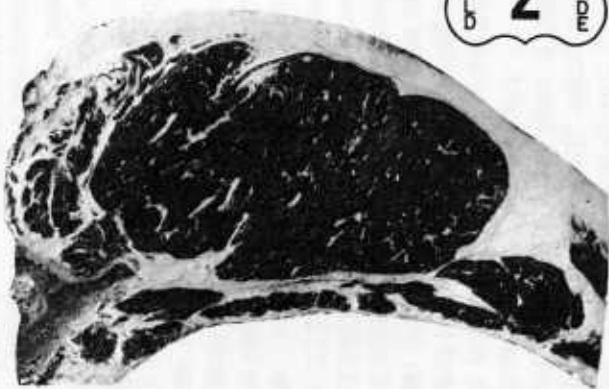


### USDA COMMERCIAL

Commercial grade beef is produced only from mature animals—the higher grades are restricted to young animals. Because Commercial grade beef comes from older animals, it is not naturally tender—even though it is well-marbled and could be mistaken by the uninformed for Prime grade (compare the pictures). Commercial grade beef requires long, slow cooking with moist heat to make it tender. But when prepared in this manner it can provide delicious and economical meat dishes—and it will have the rich, full flavor characteristic of mature beef.

## YIELD GRADES

As mentioned earlier in this booklet, the yield of usable meat from a beef carcass can vary greatly—regardless of quality grade. This variation is caused, primarily, by differences in the amount of fat on the outside of the carcass. USDA has grades to measure this yield—they are called yield grades and they are designated numerically. Yield Grade 1 denotes the highest yield, and Yield Grade 5 the lowest.



## HOW TO FIGURE RETAIL VALUE OF BEEF PURCHASED IN CARCASS FORM (AND MAKE COMPARISONS)

**Note:** To make realistic comparisons it is necessary to know both the quality grade and the yield grade of the carcass. The higher the quality the more a carcass is worth; likewise, the higher the yield grade, the more it is worth, since it will have a higher yield of lean meat. For illustration, this chart shows the yield from a 300-pound USDA Choice, Yield Grade 3, beef side—a type of carcass that is widely sold.

**EXAMPLE:** Say that you buy a 300 lb. beef side (USDA Choice, Yield Grade 3) for 65¢ a pound, hanging weight (and the price includes cutting, wrapping, and quick freezing).

**Cost of carcass purchase:** Hanging weight X quoted price=dollars required to buy side. (300 lbs. X 65¢=\$195). **But** total usable beef (see below) is only 72.8% of the hanging weight. So,  $72.8 \times 300 \text{ lbs.} = 218.40 \text{ lbs.}$  (usable beef). Therefore, your actual cost per pound for usable beef is  $\$195 \div 218.40 \text{ lbs.} = 89.3¢ \text{ per pound.}$

**Cost of retail purchases:** To figure a comparable average price for retail cuts of equivalent type and quantity, obtain local prices per pound for the retail cuts listed below. Be sure they are the same quality grade—USDA Choice in this example—and comparable in trim. The figures shown reflect cuts with a maximum of ½ inch outside fat and ground beef with about 25% fat. Then multiply each price by the number of pounds shown (second column in the table). Next total the Retail Value column. This would be your total cost, at retail, for the equivalent of a 300 lb. side of beef. To get the average cost per pound, divide this total by 218.4 pounds (the number of pounds of usable beef you would get from a 300 lb. side). Then you will have a retail price-per-pound to compare with the price per pound you would pay for usable meat in a carcass purchase (89.3¢ in this example).

Yield of Retail Cuts	Percent of Carcass (Yield Grade 3)	Pounds		Local Prices per lb.	=	Retail Value
Round Steak . . . . .	9.0	27.0	X	_____	=	_____
Rump Roast (Boneless) . . . . .	3.3	9.9	X	_____	=	_____
Porterhouse, T-Bone, Club Steaks . . . . .	5.1	15.3	X	_____	=	_____
Sirloin Steak . . . . .	8.3	24.9	X	_____	=	_____
Rib Roast (7" cut) . . . . .	6.1	18.3	X	_____	=	_____
Blade Chuck Roast . . . . .	8.9	26.7	X	_____	=	_____
Arm Chuck Roast (Boneless) . . . . .	5.8	17.4	X	_____	=	_____
Ground Beef . . . . .	11.1	33.3	X	_____	=	_____
Stew Meat . . . . .	12.3	36.9	X	_____	=	_____
Brisket (Boneless) . . . . .	2.1	6.3	X	_____	=	_____
Flank Steak . . . . .	.5	1.5	X	_____	=	_____
Kidney . . . . .	.3	.9	X	_____	=	_____
Total Retail Cuts . . . . .	<u>72.8</u>	<u>218.4</u>	X	_____	=	_____
Waste (fat, bone, and shrinkage)	27.2	81.6	X	_____	=	_____
TOTAL . . . . .	<u>100.0</u>	<u>300.0</u>	X	TOTAL RETAIL VALUE		_____



Consumers who buy only retail cuts need not be concerned about yield grades since these grades apply only to carcasses and wholesale cuts. In buying retail cuts, however, check to see that excess fat and bone have been removed.

But if you are buying carcasses or wholesale cuts, you should know about yield grades, and seek to buy beef which had been yield graded. The shield-shaped yield grade mark can be found stamped once on each quarter or wholesale cut—it is not rolled on the length of the carcass as is the quality grade shield.

Literally, the yield grades measure the yield of boneless, closely trimmed retail cuts from the high-value parts of the carcass, the round, loin, rib, and chuck. However, they also reflect differences in total yield of retail cuts. The following percentages represent expected yields of retail cuts by yield grade.

Yield Grade 1—means the carcass will yield  
79.8 percent or more in retail  
cuts,

Yield Grade 2—75.2 to 79.7 percent,

Yield Grade 3—70.6 to 75.1 percent,

Yield Grade 4—66 to 70.5 percent, and

Yield Grade 5—65.9 percent or less.

Obviously, you can afford to pay somewhat more for a higher-yielding carcass—or if no price differential is charged, you can get more for your money. At mid-1969 prices, the difference in value between USDA Choice carcasses in adjacent yield grades was about 4 cents per pound. For 300-pound sides, this would mean a value difference of \$12.

If you cannot buy carcass beef marked with the yield grade, you can get a good idea of the yield by looking at the thickness of the fat covering over the rib eye muscle. Compare the pictures shown of the rib roasts, taken from typical Yield Grade 2 and Yield Grade 4 carcasses.

For a more detailed discussion of yield grades for beef, see "USDA Yield Grades For Beef" (MB-45). It is available free on postcard request from the Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250. Include your Zipcode when writing.

## BUYING LAMB

Buying lamb for your freezer presents fewer problems than buying beef—primarily because the quality of lamb is less variable.

But the quality of lamb **does** vary, so it is advisable to buy lamb that has been graded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Since it is produced from young animals, most cuts of USDA Prime or Choice lamb are tender and can be oven roasted or broiled. Lower grades of lamb (USDA Good, Utility and Cull) are seldom marked with the grade when sold at retail.

Pictured are lamb rib chops in the two top grades, together with a description of the quality level that can be expected in each of these grades.



### USDA PRIME

Prime grade lamb is very high in tenderness, juiciness, and flavor. It has moderate marbling—flecks of fat within the lean—which enhances both flavor and juiciness. Prime chops and roasts are excellent for dry-heat cooking—broiling and roasting.

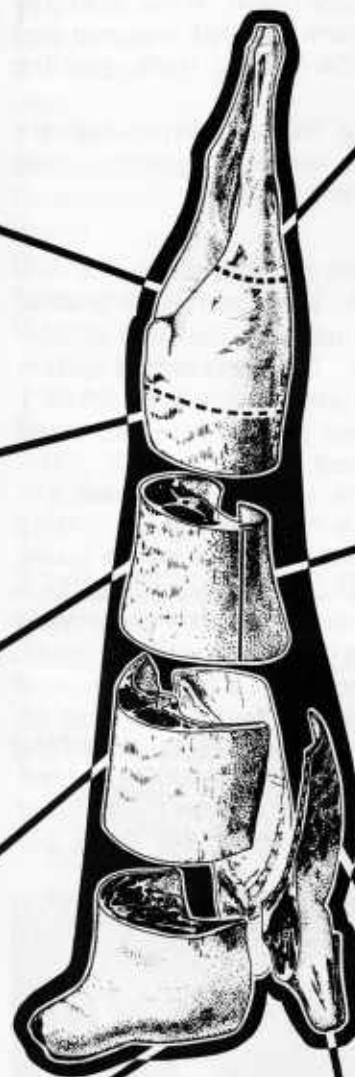
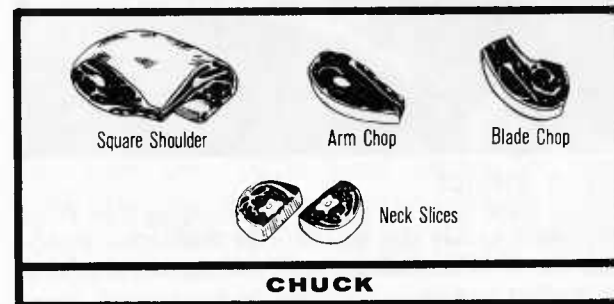
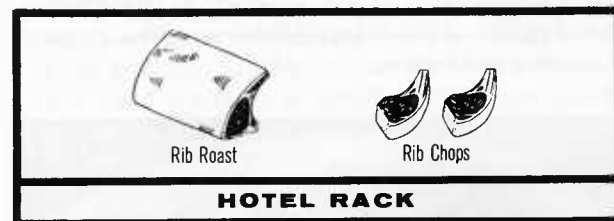
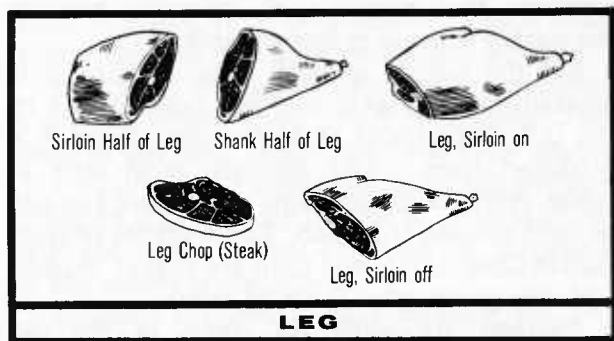


### USDA CHOICE

Choice grade lamb has slightly less marbling than Prime, but still is of very high quality. Like Prime, Choice chops and roasts are very tender, juicy and flavorful and suited to dry-heat cooking.

# LAMB

# CHART



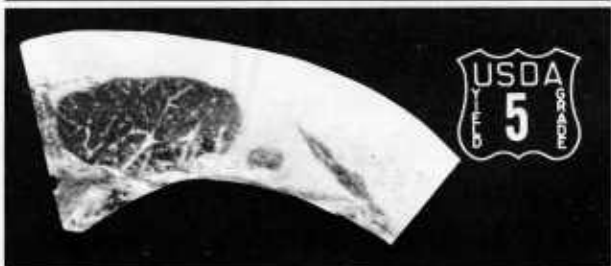
Lamb is produced from animals less than a year old. Meat from older sheep is called yearling mutton or mutton, and if it is graded these words will be stamped on the meat along with the shield-shaped grade mark. In that way, you can be sure whether you're getting lamb, yearling mutton, or mutton.

Grades for yearling mutton and mutton are the same as for lamb, except that mutton does not qualify for the Prime grade.

## Yield Grades

The U.S. Department of Agriculture also has yield grades for lamb. Like beef yield grades, yield grades for lamb measure the ratio of lean meat to fat and bone. The same rating system of five yield grades is used—with Yield Grade 1 representing the highest yield of lean meat, and Yield Grade 5 the lowest.

Generally, variations in the yield result primarily from differences in fatness on the outside of the carcass and in fat deposited on the inside of the carcass. You should be aware that there are considerable differences in the meat yield between carcasses in the same quality grade, and steer clear of those with a large amount of excess fat. The pictures below, of two lamb rib chops, illustrate an extreme variation in the amount of fat covering. Studies by USDA in 1968 indicated a value difference between carcasses of adjacent yield grades of about 3½ cents per pound.



## YIELD OF CUTS FROM YIELD GRADE 3 LAMB CARCASSES\*

	Percent of Carcass	Pounds
Retail Cuts		
Loin Chops . . . . .	16.5	8.25
Rib Chops . . . . .	8.2	4.10
Legs		
(Short Cut) . . . .	20.5	10.25
Shoulder Roast . . .	22.3	11.15
Foreshanks . . . . .	3.1	1.55
Breast . . . . .	7.9	3.95
Flank . . . . .	2.9	1.45
Stew Meat . . . . .	1.9	.95
Kidney . . . . .	.5	.25
Total Usable	<hr/>	<hr/>
Retail Cuts . . . .	83.8	41.90
Waste		
(fat, bone, shrinkage) . . . .	16.2	8.10
TOTAL	<hr/> 100.0	<hr/> 50.00

Note: To compare the price of a lamb carcass with the cost of buying the same amount of retail cuts, you can use the table above to construct a chart like the one for beef on pages 16 and 17.

\* Based on cutting test conducted by USDA in cooperation with a major retailer.

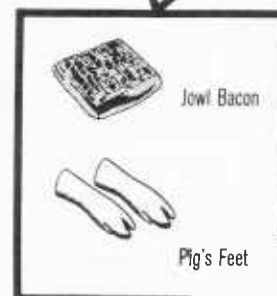
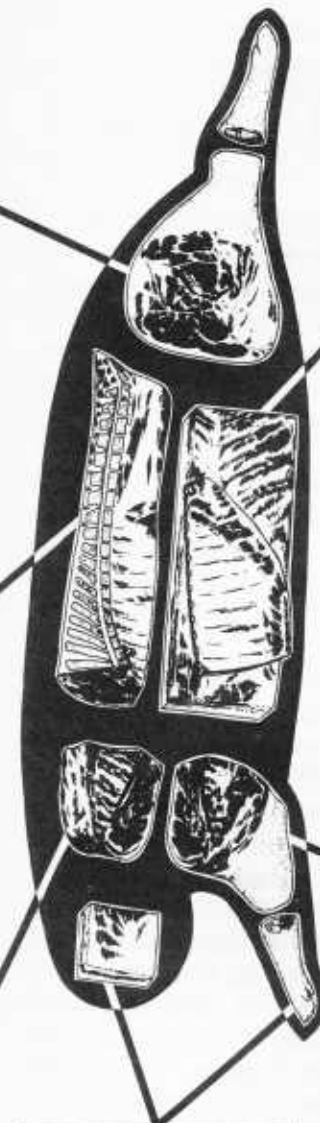
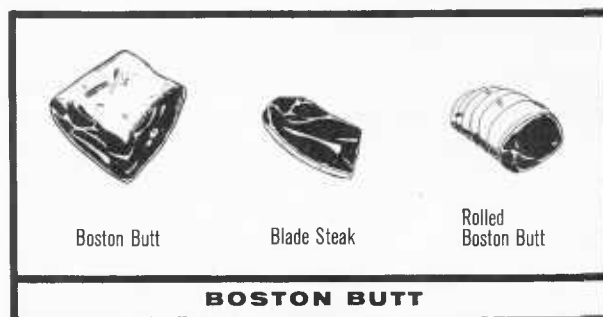
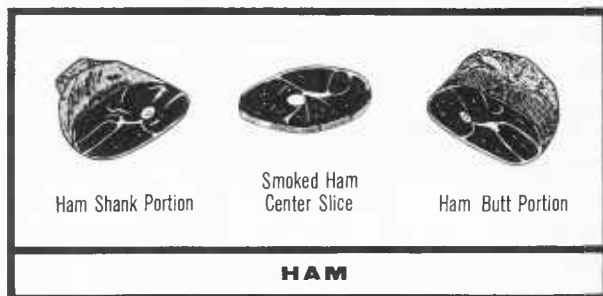
## BUYING PORK

Like lamb, pork is generally produced from young animals and is therefore less variable in quality than beef.

U.S. Department of Agriculture grades for pork reflect only two levels of quality—acceptable and unacceptable. Unacceptable quality pork—which includes that having meat that is soft and watery—is graded U.S. Utility. All higher grades must have acceptable quality of lean meat. The differences between these higher grades which are numerical, ranging from U.S. No. 1 to U.S. No. 4, are solely those of yield of the four major lean cuts. In this respect they are similar to the yield grades for beef and for lamb.

Like the yield grades for beef and for lamb, the grades for pork are not of concern to the consumer who buys pork at the retail store and the grades are not identified at the retail level. But they can be useful if you buy pork in carcass form.

# PORK CHART



Little grading of pork carcasses is presently being done, but it may be possible to order by grade through a wholesale meat dealer. A U.S. No. 1 pork carcass will yield more than 53 percent of its weight in the four major lean cuts, the ham, loin, Boston butt, and picnic shoulder. A U.S. No. 2 will yield 50–53 percent in those cuts; U.S. No. 3, 47–50 percent, and U.S. No. 4, less than 47 percent.

If you're thinking of buying a pork carcass or side, you'll want to get it from a place that is equipped to render the lard and cure the bacon, hams, and other cuts that you may not want to use fresh. If you cannot obtain this service, you would probably find it better to buy wholesale cuts of fresh pork, such as shoulders, loins, and hams.

In buying pork, look for cuts with a relatively small amount of fat over the outside and with meat that is firm and a grayish pink color. For best eating, the meat should have a small amount of marbling.

## HOW MUCH SHOULD I BUY?

How much meat you should buy at any one time depends, of course, on how much you want to spend at one time, the amount of freezer storage space you have available, and how much your family consumes. You will need to do some figuring.

Properly wrapped meat cuts, stored at 0 degrees F., or lower, will maintain their quality for a long time. This varies, however, with the kind of meat. In the table below, the times indicated represent a range within which you can store the meat with reasonable expectation that it will maintain its quality. Meats can be kept safely frozen for longer periods than indicated, but they are apt to lose quality.

### SUGGESTED STORAGE TIMES FOR MEAT AT 0° F.

Beef . . . . .	8–12 months
Lamb . . . . .	8–12 months
Pork, fresh . . . . .	4–8 months
Ground beef and lamb . . . . .	3–4 months
Pork Sausage . . . . .	1–3 months

On the average, one cubic foot of freezer space will accommodate 35 to 40 pounds of cut and wrapped meat, though it will be slightly less if the meat is packaged in odd shapes.

Meat should be initially frozen at  $-10^{\circ}\text{F.}$  or lower, and as quickly as possible. If you are freezing it yourself, allow some space for air to circulate between the packages.

The amount of food frozen at one time should be limited in order to get as quick and efficient freezing as possible. Only the amount of unfrozen food that will freeze within 24 hours should be put into the freezer. Usually that will be about 2 or 3 pounds to each cubic foot of freezer capacity. The speed of freezing will be slower if the freezer is overloaded with unfrozen food.

For large meat purchases, it is usually best to get the freezing done by a commercial establishment properly equipped to do the job. Quick freezing causes less damage to the meat fibers. Slower freezing causes more of the cells to rupture, due to formation of large ice crystals, so that more meat juices are lost when the meat is thawed.

Proper wrapping of meat for the freezer is as important as proper storage. Use a moisture-vapor-proof wrap, such as heavy aluminum foil, heavily waxed freezer paper, or specially laminated papers. Wrap the meat closely, eliminating all air if possible. Double thicknesses of waxed paper should be placed between chops and steaks to prevent their sticking together. Seal the packages well and mark them with the date. The rule in using frozen meat should be: First in, first out.

Improperly wrapped packages will allow air to enter and draw moisture from the meat, resulting in "freezer burn" or meat which is dry and less flavorful.

It is perfectly safe to refreeze meat that has been kept refrigerated after thawing. However, refreezing of defrosted meat is not usually recommended because there is some loss of meat quality.



# USDA Grades Help You Choose MEAT FOR YOUR FREEZER

## To Get Good Value—check:

- **Quality**—USDA Prime, highest quality  
USDA Choice, high quality, widely available
- **Wholesomeness**—USDA inspection assures safe, clean meat
- **Cost**—check costs of buying as retail cuts vs. as a wholesale cut, carcass, side, or quarter—consider cutting loss

## How Much to Buy?—check:

- Available storage space
- Amounts your family can use within reasonable time
- Amount of money you want to spend at one time

**Know Your Meat Cuts—study carcass charts**

**To Preserve Quality—wrap meat properly, freeze quickly.**

Beef, lamb, and pork charts adapted from those supplied by National Live Stock and Meat Board.

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